Community Benefits in Transit-Oriented Development

Good Jobs First Conference

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FRESC utilizes policy development and advocacy, academic-level actionable research, community organizing and non-partisan civic engagement to promote the creation of jobs that pay family-sustaining wages with benefits, housing and health care which are affordable to all families, and neighborhoods that are environmentally safe and sustainable.

- Community Benefits is a key strategy
- Labor-community partnership
- Broad coalition of labor, low-income housing residents, environmental groups, community organizations, micro-business, and faith
Denver Context

FasTracks
- 2004 voter approved regional transit expansion
- 6 new lines, 15 year build-out, $6.1 billion
- 60 new stations
- average of 2,413 construction jobs annually (transit only)
- primary driver of development and public investment
Ensuring Equitable TOD

- Policy advocacy where possible
  - Transit agency joint development
  - TOD Plans
  - Municipal policies
- Site-specific neighborhood organizing
  - Input from vulnerable communities in TOD-plans
  - Community benefit goals in planning documents
- Site-specific comprehensive community benefit campaigns
  - Cherokee-Gates (completed 2006)
  - Union Station (in progress)
- Framing and messaging
Opportunity

Community Benefits Have the Potential to Capture:

- Construction jobs
- New permanent jobs
- Greater mobility for transit-dependent populations (elderly, disabled, youth)
- Expanded economic opportunity for training and jobs
- Household transportation savings
Elements Impacting Community Benefit Potential at Transit

- Development leveraged for transit infrastructure, limiting availability of funds for other benefits
- Speculation leading to inflated land costs → harder to do affordable housing, debate about using limited subsidies on most expensive land
- Higher infrastructure costs
- Not all TOD involves public subsidies/leverage
- Long time frame from area planning → proposed development planning → actual development
Success in Spite of Challenges

Cherokee Gates Redevelopment
Community Benefits at Cherokee- Gates

- 50 acres + 15 acres owned by transit agency
- Remediation of a contaminated site that had been vacant for 10 years
- 2,500 units of new housing
- 1.8 million square feet of new retail, entertainment and commercial space.
Community Benefits at Cherokee- Gates

The Campaign for Responsible Development
RESEARCH

- Document the need/problem
- Identify solutions
- Examples from other TODs helpful but not essential – similarities between TOD and other urban in-fill
Community Benefits at Cherokee- Gates

Organizing

- Public Involvement
- Public Pressure from Diverse Voices
Community Benefits at Cherokee- Gates

Lobbying

- Decision Makers
- Key Administrative Appointees and Staff
Achievements on Good Jobs

- Formal agreement excluding big-box grocery stores
- Revived and improved “Local Hiring”
- Prevailing wage on infrastructure construction
- Selection of a union General Contractor willing to use “Best Value Contracting” to consider health care and training in selection of subs
- Extension of City’s Living Wage to jobs contracted by developer (security, parking)
Community Benefits at Cherokee-Gates

Achievements on Affordable Housing

- 100 rental units ≤ 50% of AMI (10% of rentals)
- 100 rental units ≤ 30% of AMI (to be operated by non-profit) (10% of rentals)
- Dispersal
- Developer absorbs much of cost (presumably by reduced price for sale of land)
- Obligated to pursue tax-credits and other subsidies for 50 of the 30% units (housing not TIF-eligible expenditure in Colorado)
Community Benefits at Cherokee-Gates

Achievements on Environmental Clean-Up

- Change in state-wide TCE standards, which were more lax than federal prior to campaign
- Off-site, indoor air testing for TCE
- Establishment of and developer cooperation with a Voluntary Clean-up Advisory Board made up of local residents to monitor environmental clean-up
- Free and automatic access to all clean-up documents at local library
Community Benefits at Cherokee- Gates
Union Station

Hub of the FasTracks System

- Nearly 20 acre site
- Land controlled jointly by four governmental entities
- Private developer partner will build transit infrastructure, develop 1.5 million sq feet mixed-use above/around

www.unionstationforall.com
http://www.youtube.com/user/frescdenver